

New Vision

Minor League • The Pursuits of Samson • Judges 16:4-30 • 04/29/2018

The Pursuits of Samson

Judges 16:4-30 4/29/2018

Main Point

We should never squander in trivial pursuits what God has given us to bring glory to Him.

Getting to know me

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is one thing you spend time doing that you wished you spent less time doing?

What are some of the things those pursuits might reveal about the state of your heart?

There's a hall of fame for all types of sports and music. What does it take to get into a hall of fame? If you could be in a hall of fame for your abilities, which one would you want to be in and why? (Baseball, Country Music, etc.)

Have you ever felt you past limits God's ability to use you? How does Samson's story encourage you?

All of us need to check out every once in a while and do something that doesn't mean anything. But as we check out, we should be careful to make sure that what entertains us doesn't become what drives us. If we don't, we will wind up pursuing (with our time, money and energy) things that don't really matter in the end. As Christians, we have primarily been called to give our whole selves to the purposes of God. We should never squander in trivial pursuits the things God has given us to bring Him glory.

Into the Bible

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Ask a volunteer to read Judges 13:24-25.

When you look back at your own story, what were some of the ways God blessed you? What comes along with that sense of blessing?

The Angel of the Lord had promised Samson's mother that her son would begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines (v. 5). How did the Lord indicate to Samson that the time had come to fulfill his God-given purpose?

How can we discern when the Spirit of the Lord is directing us to a specific task or ministry?

In Hebrews 11:32-34 the author lists Samson in the hall of faith. Does it surprise you that Samson made the list? Why or why not?

What is the significance of Samson's hair growing back?

Judges 16:22

As Christians, we are blessed of God and have been given spiritual gifts and opportunities. God expects us to use our abilities and spiritual gifts for His service. The Holy Spirit lives in us and empowers us to accomplish His mission in the world.

When did you first recognize the Spirit of the Lord directing you to serve Him with your gifts? How did you recognize it was the Lord empowering you, and not yourself?

Ask a volunteer to read Judges 16:4-5,15-17.

It's easy to treat the gifts God has given us casually, taking them for granted. Observing Samson's downfall, we need to be careful, remembering that God expects us to act responsibly and not trifle with the opportunities, abilities, and spiritual gifts He gives us.

Ask a volunteer to read Judges 16:19-30.

What thoughts, attitudes, and actions can lead to spiritual insensitivity?

How do we guard against losing our spiritual sensitivity? What can we do to be more receptive to God's presence and direction in our lives?

Disregarding the Spirit's guidance and conviction leads to spiritual insensitivity. We can't ignore God in our lives and expect to keep a close relationship with Him. We can sharpen our spiritual sensitivity by spending time in Bible study, prayer, and worship.

Bible students have debated whether Samson in these verses was finally affirming the Lord as his source of strength, or was still showing a self-centered attitude. Note the focus on "me" and "my" in his prayer. Nevertheless, Samson is listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:32-34. Sadly, it appears that his greatest spiritual impact was in his death, not in his life.

Did Samson need the Lord to remember him (v. 28), or did he need to remember the Lord? What does it mean to remember the Lord today?

How did Samson's physical blindness lead to spiritual insight? How did losing his great strength lead him to rely on the Lord?

In what ways has God used your weakness and imperfections to accomplish His Kingdom purposes?

Although we lose our spiritual sensitivity when we repeatedly disobey God's commands, God can use flawed people who are willing to put their faith in Him. It is never too late to turn our attention back to the Lord, believing that He hears and answers our prayers.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What could you change so your prayers focus more on God's interests and goals than on your own?

How will you "remember" the Lord as you fulfill your obligations at work, at home, and at church? What will you do to keep Him at the center of your decisions?

What are some things that are keeping you from getting up, showing up and changing up?

What are the pillars in your life that you need to push down?

Judges 16:19

What do you think it would take to be listed in the hall of faith?

Pray

Thank the Lord for choosing us and setting us apart for His service. Thank Him also that He works through our weaknesses and imperfections to accomplish His will. Ask God to reveal any spiritual "blind spots" that hinder our service to God and that He would teach us to rely on His strength.

Commentary

Judges 16:4-5,15-17

Verses 15-17. Three times Delilah asked Samson the source of his strength, and three times he lied to her (see 16:6-14). After each lie, she actually did to Samson what he said would sap his strength. He was astonishingly foolish not to realize that if he revealed the true source of his strength, she would betray him.

Delilah wasn't about to stop trying. She nagged him day after day and pleaded with him until she wore him down. We can only assume that the combination of her nagging, his obsessing over her, and his bloated sense of being invincible made Samson utterly reckless. Not cutting his hair was the one aspect of his Nazirite vow—perhaps the only aspect—that he had kept faithfully. (See Explore More: Nazirite, below.) God continued to sustain his strength so long as Samson upheld that requirement. Samson evidently knew this to be the case. By continuing to give himself to Delilah, however, he lost the will to maintain even this minimal obedience.

Judges 16:19-20

Verse 19. The outcome of Samson's recklessness wasn't hard to predict. She let him fall asleep on her lap and called a man to shave off the seven braids on his head. The seven braids probably included his beard as well as the hair on his head.

Verse 20. As before, once the deed was done Delilah roused Samson from sleep with a frantic warning about the Philistines. Samson calmly boasted, "I will escape as I did before and shake myself free." However, his hair and his strength were gone. The Philistines easily overpowered and bound him, blinded him, and took him off as a trophy to Gaza (see 16:21), just as he had once carried off their city gate.

We can think of Samson's "blindness" on multiple levels. First, he was blind to think that he could trust Delilah and that she really loved him. She had shown previously that she would take advantage of any weakness in him. Second, Samson was blind to think that he could escape the consequences of his foolish, sinful behavior. Third, on awakening he evidently didn't notice that his hair was gone. However, this "blindness" served only as a token for the fourth and most profound blindness: Samson did not know that the Lord had left him.

The Spirit had been with Samson in the sense that God empowered him to accomplish mighty feats in battle. Elsewhere in the Bible, the Holy Spirit empowered people for other tasks. The Spirit empowered the builder of the tabernacle to construct the facility properly (see Ex. 31:1-5). By the Holy Spirit, the prophets heard and proclaimed the words of God, and sometimes by the power of God they too could show amazing physical strength or endurance (see 1 Kings 18:12,46).

When the Spirit left Samson, the warrior lost the real source of his strength. It is perhaps significant that only in his physical weakness did Samson realize the Lord had departed. It seems that Samson's heart and soul were so far from God that, apart from his lack of strength, he never would have noticed God's absence.

Judges 16:28-30

Verses 28-29. At a festival in honor of their god, the Philistines decided to bring out their trophy and put Samson on display while drunken revelers watched (see 16:25-27). Shackled and humiliated, Samson

nevertheless saw an opportunity for revenge. He asked his guard to be stationed between two of the temple's supporting pillars. Apparently twin pillars served as primary weight-bearing supports, perhaps at the temple entrance.

It is difficult to know what to make of Samson's end. On the one hand, he prayed to the Lord for strength, and his prayer was answered. Yet his prayer contained no hint of repentance for sinful behavior or concern for the glory of God. All he wanted was vengeance: "Lord God, please remember me. Strengthen me, God, just once more. With one act of vengeance, let me pay back the Philistines for my two eyes."

Verse 30. Another troubling aspect of Samson's end was his request to die with the Philistines. Neither Judaism nor Christianity has ever endorsed suicide, much less using suicide to kill others. Nevertheless, Samson prayed, pushed against the pillars, and brought down the temple, giving him a peculiar epitaph: the dead he killed at his death were more than those he had killed in his life.

We cannot endorse how Samson died, but we cannot deny that his prayer was answered. As a result of the prayer, he won a victory over his enemies. While God was dishonored by Samson's sinful behavior, God nevertheless honored the calling He had given Samson, whose Nazirite status was visibly demonstrated in the new growth of his hair (see 16:22). Samson had failed to fulfill his calling, but in the end he turned to God in faith. God responded to Samson's faith (see Heb. 11:32-34).